

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13 HA-05 TRSE-00 EB-08 AID-05
ACDA-12 /114 W

-----038774 301510Z /40

R 300850Z DEC 77
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7218
INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USLO PEKING
AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 36823

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, CB, TH, SW, OVIP

REF: (A) BANGKOK 36181 (NOTAL) (B) STOCKHOLM 5437

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. BANGKOK PRESS DEC 30 CARRIED WIRE SERVICE STORIES FROM STOCKHOLM REPORTING TV COMMENTS BY SWEDISH AMBASSADOR TO BANGKOK, JEAN-CHRISTOPHE OBERG, ON SITUATION IN CAMBODIA AS OBSERVED DURING HIS DEC 22-24 "TOURIST VISIT" TO ANGKOR WAT AND SIEM REAP. STORIES QUOTE OBERG AS SAYING HE SAW NO SIGNS OF OPPRESSION AND CRUELTY AGAINST THE CIVILIAN POPULATION. REGARDING REPORTS OF FORCED LABOR THROUGHOUT CAMBODIA, OBERG REPORTEDLY SAID HE SAW ONLY FOUR ARMED GUARDS, INCLUDING ONE
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YOUNG GIRL, DURING HIS 150 KILOMETER TRIP. REGARDING CAMBODIA'S DESERTED CITIES, OBERG SAID THAT THE LEADERSHIP FOUND IT MORE PRACTICAL TO MOVE INHABITANTS TO THE COUNTRYSIDE THAN TO TRANSPORT FOOD TO THE CITIES. OBERG OBSERVED THAT CAMBODIAN LEADERS ARE FULLY AWARE OF VIEWS HELD BY THE OUTSIDE WORLD ABOUT THE SITUATION IN CAMBODIA, "BUT THEY (CAMBODIANS) GIVE PRIORITY

TO OTHER THINGS AND DON'T CARE WHAT WE FEEL. THEY WORK ON A COMPLETELY NEW SOCIETY AFTER THEIR OWN PATTERN." OBERG REPORTEDLY COMMENTED, "NATURALLY, IT IS HARD FOR US WESTERNERS TO RECOGNIZE THIS ATTITUDE AS WE LIVE IN OPEN SOCIETIES, BUT THE CAMBODIANS HAVE CHOSEN ANOTHER WAY AND THERE IS NOT MUCH WE CAN DO ABOUT IT." HE IS ALSO REPORTED AS HAVING EXPRESSED PUZZLEMENT OVER THE ESTIMATES THAT OVER ONE MILLION PEOPLE HAVE BEEN KILLED SINCE THE COMMUNIST TAKEOVER IN 1975.
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2. COMMENT: OBERG'S REMARKS, AS REPORTED IN THE PRESS STORIES, MAY APPEAR MORE IRRESPONSIBLE AND OBSEQUIOUS THAN WHEN TAKEN IN THE FULL CONTEXT OF HIS TV INTERVIEW. AS A GRACIOUS GUEST, HE PRESUMABLY FELT CONSTRAINED NOT TO CRITICIZE THE POLICIES AND PRACTICES OF HIS HOSTS. HOWEVER, HE SEEMS TO HAVE BENT OVER BACKWARD IN THIS PUBLIC BREAD AND BUTTER NOTE TO PHNOM PENH. THE SWEDISH FOREIGN MINISTRY SEEMS TO AGREE. WE NOTE ANOTHER AP ITEM CITING THE SWEDISH FOREIGN MINISTRY WHICH STATES THAT SWEDISH AMBASSADOR TO PEKING AND CONCURRENTLY PHNOM PENH BJORCK WILL VISIT KAMPUCHEA NEXT MONTH FOR TWO WEEKS AND BE IN A BETTER POSITION TO JUDGE CONDITIONS IN CAMBODIA.
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3. WE HAVE CONFIRMED WITH SOURCES CLOSE TO PM KRIANGSAK AND INDEPENDENTLY OUR IMPRESSION THAT VISIT TO CAMBODIA BY AMBASSADOR OBERG WAS PRIVATE, NOT AT INSTIGATION OF THE RTG. PM KRIANGSAK DID UNDOUBTEDLY, HOWEVER, TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE VISIT TO SEND MESSAGE TO PHNOM PENH THAT THE RTG REMAINS SINCERE IN ITS DESIRE TO IMPROVE TIES WITH CAMBODIA.

4. AMBASSADOR OBERG IS STILL ON VACATION. DIPLOMATIC CORPS IS AWAITING HIS RETURN TO LEARN HIS PRIVATE VIEWS OF DEMOCRATIC KAMPUCHEA. EARLY COMMENT INDICATES THAT HIS SWEDISH TV REMARKS HAVE DONE LITTLE TO EMBELLISH HIS REPUTATION, ALREADY QUESTIONED, AS AN OBJECTIVE OBSERVER OF DEVELOPMENTS IN SE ASIAN LIBERATION STRUGGLES.
WHITEHOUSE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 30-Dec-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977BANGKO36823
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780003-0189
Format: TEL
From: BANGKOK
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t1977125/aaaaadxl.tel
Line Count: 109
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 708ae002-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 BANGKOK 36181, 77 STOCKHOLM 5437
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10-Jan-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 216489
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: WIRE SERVICE STORIES ON TV COMMENTS BY SWEDISH AMBASSADOR TO BANGKOK
TAGS: PINT, OVIP, SOPN, CB, TH, SW
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/708ae002-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009